United Nations A/59/PV.118

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

118th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 13 September 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 4.50 p.m.

Agenda items 45 and 55 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/59/L.70)

The President (*spoke in French*): Members will recall that under these items, the Assembly adopted resolutions 59/145 and 59/291 on the preparation for and organization of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of September 2005.

In connection with the two items, the General Assembly now has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/59/L.70, submitting the draft outcome document that has been annexed to the draft resolution.

Before we proceed further, I should like to consult the General Assembly with a view to taking up the draft resolution that appears in document A/59/L.70. In that connection, since the draft resolution was only circulated earlier today, it will be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting".

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to that proposal.

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): As members are aware, there has not been enough time to process the draft outcome document into all official languages. In that connection, it is my understanding that delegations are ready to consider the draft resolution to which is annexed, in English only, the draft outcome document. The draft resolution itself has been issued in all official languages.

With that understanding, we shall proceed accordingly.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution contained in document A/59/L.70, entitled "Draft outcome document of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly of September 2005". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/59/L.70?

Draft resolution A/59/L.70 was adopted (resolution 59/314).

The President (*spoke in French*): Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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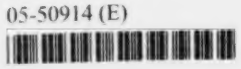

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Abelardo Moreno (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation has been obliged to take the floor at this point in our debate in order to present our views on the exercise now coming to an end and on the omissions and distortions that we feel are contained in the text agreed upon this afternoon.

First of all, we feel that the negotiation process has been characterized by irregularities, a lack of transparency and secrecy. At the same time, special emphasis was given to the interests of a few powerful countries and groups of countries to the detriment of smaller and underdeveloped countries.

A clear example of these irregularities is the omission from the text before us of the paragraph pertaining to unilateral coercive measures, even though that paragraph repeated, word for word, the paragraph on this point that was adopted at the Johannesburg Summit and that has been reaffirmed at other important United Nations summits. Although it had clearly been indicated that the paragraphs containing agreed language would be inserted in the final document, we were surprised to see that this paragraph was omitted. We have no other choice than to believe that this was done in order to satisfy others, such as the delegation of the United States of America, which had been the only one to insist upon keeping that paragraph in brackets.

In addition, we wish to reserve our position on certain aspects included in the document that my delegation believes satisfy neither the interests of the majority of the Member States nor the interests of my country.

This is the case, for example, of paragraph 124, specifically the wording calling for a doubling of resources allocated to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. This wording contradicts the lack of resources frequently mentioned during this process and favours one sector to the detriment of others for which it is said that there is neither a budget nor resources.

Likewise, in order to bring paragraph 139 into full accordance with the United Nations Charter, that paragraph should have referred only to application of Chapter VII of the Charter in those cases in which the phenomena described in the paragraph could not have been prevented or controlled in countries where the State had collapsed. Unfortunately, the wording used here is different.

Regarding paragraph 159, the wording that has been approved has considerably broadened the mandate of the proposed human rights organ. Now, it would address not only cases of gross and systematic violations of human rights but also what is simply pointed to as violations of human rights.

The provisions adopted in these paragraphs in no way guarantee the prevention of the double standards, the politicization and the selective approaches that until now have characterized the human rights organs of this Organization.

We are concerned by paragraph 163, especially subparagraph (b). We believe that the review of mandates that is called for could be manipulated for political purposes. That process, of course, must be purely intergovernmental and should be in accordance with existing rules for such processes.

Regarding subparagraph 164 (b), we do not support an external evaluation of the United Nations auditing and oversight mechanisms. In our view, this decision would place the United Nations, which by definition should be neutral and impartial, at the mercy of questionable political interests.

Regarding the first point in the section concerning operational activities, in paragraph 169, I would like to recall that my country only recognizes that the resident coordinator for operational activities for development fulfils the role required for the implementation of specific programmes and projects in a country. At the same time, that paragraph should in no way weaken the identity of agencies of the system operating within a given country.

We consider it most unfortunate that in this document it was not possible to include a section on disarmament, at least with wording identical to that agreed upon at the Millennium Summit. This could set a harmful precedent for the Organization's work.

Likewise, we believe that it is a shame that this document does not reaffirm the outcome of the major United Nations conferences held during the past five years and that the paragraphs pertaining to development, specifically concerning trade, have been weakened in such a way that they do not reflect the

interest of the third world and do not transmit an appropriate message to the World Trade Organization's ministerial meeting that is to be held in Hong Kong.

Finally, I would like to inform this body that the head of the Cuban delegation to this high-level summit, His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, President of the Cuban National Assembly, received a visa for travel to New York only at 4:30 this afternoon, just half an hour ago, and is, therefore, unable to attend the opening meeting tomorrow. The head of the Cuban delegation has asked me to explain clearly to the General Assembly the reasons for his absence on the morning of 14 September.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): On behalf of the European Union and the countries that have aligned themselves with my statement, may I offer very sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, to the Secretary-General and to everybody in this room for what has just been achieved.

The adoption of this outcome document is a tremendous achievement, one which only a few days ago we did not expect so soon. The fact that it has been accomplished is a tribute to the effort made by a huge number of delegations, and from different inputs. We thank everybody for that. It means that the summit can start on the correct basis. For us, the challenge, of course, will be to sustain during the sixtieth session the progress that has been agreed upon today. We believe that the Assembly has provided the basis for developing and implementing the policies and reform required to set the United Nations fair for future challenges.

If I may, on behalf of those I represent, I would like to offer you, Mr. President, our warmest personal congratulations, as well as our thanks to you and your team for the service you have given us. I rate it as one of the highlights of my career to have had the privilege of working with you. I salute the efforts you have made, the dexterity with which you have shown leadership but yet responded to everybody in the Hall and, in particular, even at the darkest times, the good humour that you have shown. I thank you on behalf of all of us.

Today's vote is a fitting legacy to your stewardship. The challenge for your successor is to now lead the General Assembly in the direction of implementation and development of what has been put in place. Our belief is that we have taken the right decisions. Reform is a continuing process, but we have provided the foundations for actually meeting tomorrow's challenges, which were so correctly identified by the Secretary-General two years ago.

So, you have our warm thanks, Mr. President. But a particular tribute goes to all our colleagues. Despite the difficulties, at the end, when it came to accepting texts that no one was absolutely happy with, the fact that everybody rallied to your leadership, Sir, is a tribute to everybody.

Mr. Rodríguez Araque (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Venezuela has been truly astonished at the surprising manner in which a document of 35 pages — provided only in English, thereby making it impossible to familiarize oneself with its contents in any other language — has been adopted. It would seem physically impossible to adopt such a text, especially given that it was circulated solely among a small clique of — as I understand it — 15 persons, and among an even smaller group today. I have been fortunate enough to have taken speed-reading courses — but not "instant" reading courses that would enable me, in such a brief span, to acquaint myself with every point. We may well have agreed with many of those points. But it is also very likely that we might have been in complete disagreement with others. There was not even an opportunity to make any sort of proposal or to disagree with any of the content of those 35 voluminous pages.

Moreover, the procedure under which this has been done flagrantly violated the most basic tenets governing democratic processes. Let us not forget that many countries are represented in the Organization. They, in turn, represent billions of human beings, to whom we must be accountable precisely because we hold their fate in our hands. For us to be unaware of what is being adopted here would mean compounding the lack of general awareness about decisions with an impact on vital areas of people's lives.

Given the way that this document — which remained completely unknown to us until this very moment — has been adopted, the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is obliged to reserve judgement on it. I understand that we are not alone in that regard. I am convinced that many other countries

are in a situation similar to Venezuela's. For I find it hard — not to say impossible — to believe that the countries that were not part of the select group with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with and discuss the document, or to propose, bracket, delete and add language to it in fact had sufficient time to pass judgement on it.

At a time when there is so much preaching about democratic principles, it is truly regrettable that an Organization that should be a world paragon of democratic practice should be setting such a sorry and sad example of complete refutation of democratic procedure. Like many others, the delegation of Venezuela was excluded from this process. It is therefore absolutely impossible for us to be part of the shameful adoption of something that we know nothing about. We therefore reserve our position.

We hope that this does not become the Organization's practice in the future, for that would completely undermine the prestige and credibility of the Organization in the eyes of the billions of thinking and feeling human beings throughout the world who were not part of the group privileged and lucky enough to take part in the drafting and adoption of this document.

The President (*spoke in French*): I would like once again to sincerely thank the facilitators and the members of the various groups who contributed to this solution. I would also like to thank all Member States for their valuable contributions to the finalization of the final outcome document.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to conclude its consideration of agenda items 45 and 55?

It was so decided.

Closing statement by the President

The President (*spoke in French*): The fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly is coming to an end today. The least one can say about it is that it was a particularly busy session. We held a total of 212 meetings, including 118 plenary meetings, 51 informal plenary meetings, 19 informal thematic consultations and 16 round tables. As members are aware, the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly coincides with the year marking the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations and with the preparations for the High-level Plenary Meeting that will begin tomorrow, Wednesday, 14 September 2005. That meeting will assess the major United Nations conferences and summits in the social and economic fields held during the 1990s, including the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, in particular the Millennium Development Goals.

Not only did we have to carry out the normal activities of an ordinary Assembly session; we also had to spend half, and perhaps even most of our time, preparing for that important summit meeting, in which more than 150 heads of State and Government will participate. It is my hope that the decisions they take will enable the United Nations to mark a decisive turning point in its history. The many and complex questions they will have to address concern the identity and shape of our common future.

More than half a century after the creation of the United Nations in 1945, it has now become crucial that the international community examine the state of our world in an in-depth manner. That is why the General Assembly devoted many meetings to discussing the great problems of our times and to seeking appropriate solutions that would meet the expectations of our peoples. In their turn, we took up the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (A/59/565) and the report of the Millennium Project prepared under the leadership of Professor Jeffrey Sachs (A/59/727); finally, we engaged in intensive consultations on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005), enriched by many contributions from Member States and from a variety of groups.

The great challenge for us throughout those difficult consultations was to try to reconcile the often divergent views of the 191 States Members of the United Nations regarding the efforts to be undertaken and the work to be done to meet humanity's need for enhanced development, for peace and security and for the protection and promotion of human rights. In considering those questions we worked tirelessly, trying constantly to achieve for each of them a balanced solution.

On development, we needed to find a satisfactory balance between the moral imperative to meet the needs of developing countries and finding the resources necessary to do so. We sought the same balance when we recommended to our heads of State or Government the adoption of clear measures to

guarantee fairer international trade that would be more conducive to development. We tried also to identify responses to the threats facing our world: for example, protecting the environment also means helping ensuring the well-being of future generations.

At this session we also devoted all due attention to the fight against HIV/AIDS. The High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS, held on 2 June 2005, reminded us that we must redouble our efforts, particularly in seeking new financial resources and further involving civil society — in particular those living with HIV/AIDS — in all aspects of combating the disease. This work shall continue in 2006.

At this session the Assembly also strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and civil society, notably through the first-ever hearings of the General Assembly with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, held on 23 and 24 June 2005.

On 27 and 28 June, the second High-level Dialogue of the General Assembly on Financing for Development took place to assess implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and to discuss endeavours to ensure its full implementation.

At its fifty-ninth session, the General Assembly spent many hours considering the right solutions that can make our world safer by protecting our peoples from the threat of war, from armed conflict and from the proliferation of weapons. To that end, we laid particular stress on combating terrorism. The International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism was adopted, and in our discussions on the question — although these were sometimes marked by divergent positions — we found at least one point of agreement in a firm and unambiguous condemnation of terrorism. I am pleased that a broad consensus emerged recognizing the interdependence among threats and challenges and the need for collective action to address them, consistent with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

A major challenge for the twenty-first century remains the peaceful settlement of disputes and the urgent establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission in order to break the vicious cycle of which States barely emerging from conflict often remain prisoners. Clearly, the existence of an environment fostering the rule of law and human rights can consolidate our efforts to promote development, peace and security and can ensure that they continue. Agreement among Member States to better address grave situations such as those involving genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity itself constitutes significant progress.

All the items discussed in the course of the fifty-ninth session — often, in recent days, in a very tough manner — reflect the central role of the United Nations in the conduct the affairs of a globalized world. I am happy that all of us are aware that we must do everything possible to adapt the Organization's institutions to the realities of the twenty-first century. To succeed, we must continue to strive to revitalize the work of the General Assembly by strengthening its role and its authority. I am pleased that yesterday the Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution on that subject (resolution 59/313).

Further, we must give the Economic and Social Council the means to fulfil its task of coordinating the work of the United Nations in the economic and social field. And we must, of course, get down to reforming the Security Council. Moreover, we all agree that we can fully ensure the solidity of our multilateral architecture only by modernizing the way in which the Secretariat — which is facing new, ever more difficult challenges — is managed.

In a few weeks' time, the United Nations, our common House, will mark its sixtieth birthday. After this long and difficult process of consultation and negotiation, we have proposed a document to be submitted to our heads of State or Government so that they can take important decisions on the process of reforming the Organization and on the new configuration we want to give our world. Now we must move from statements of principle to action.

As I pass the torch to my successor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, I wish to describe three great lessons I have learned from my experience as President of the General Assembly.

The first lesson relates to the responsibilities of the President. These have considerably increased owing, first, to the greater number and complexity of the items on the Assembly's agenda; secondly, to the extended duration of the session, which now continues throughout the year, requiring a nearly constant presence in New York; thirdly, to the greater number of tasks for the President, which have also increased

owing to the many requests from Member States and non-governmental and civil society organizations; and fourthly, to the need for the President to act as an interface between the Secretariat and the intergovernmental process. I have learned the importance of strengthening the capacities of the President of the General Assembly, inter alia by increasing the human and material resources available to the presidency, and I believe it would be useful to consider this. As members know, some resolutions adopted in the past, and this year, are in line with that view. We must continue on that path.

The second lesson I wish to share relates to the stress placed upon the General Assembly as a forum for consultation and negotiation. If we are to better supervise the intergovernmental process, I am certain that we should always avoid proceeding in an ad hoc manner. Intensive consultations this year have amply proven that in the future we ought perhaps to find a framework for our negotiations that is more stable, more representative, calmer and more conducive to a more dynamic, more effective intergovernmental negotiating process.

The third and final point concerns the establishment of a more formal forum for dialogue with civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. We know that the support and contributions of civil society to the discussion of major items — such as the promotion of peace and security, development and human rights, particularly in the framework of strengthening the United Nations and adapting it to the realities of the twenty-first century — are important to the advent of a better world.

I should like to close by thanking you all from the bottom of my heart: members of the Secretariat as well as all the diplomats with whom I have had contact throughout this year. I have spent with you one of the most memorable years, one of the most stimulating years of my entire diplomatic career. This year will be unforgettable in more than one respect. It was a unique opportunity given to me and to my country to share with you the experience of talented diplomats from all countries, to share your sympathy, friendship and fraternity.

I am particularly delighted that I had the privilege of presiding over a General Assembly that covered a vast spectrum of crucial items on its agenda. I will leave New York with a better understanding of the major questions of concern to the international community as a whole. This is a great asset for me, as Foreign Minister. I would like to tell you how fascinated I was by the vitality of the General Assembly, the enthusiasm and determination of diplomats who at the highest level spent much time considering important issues. Such work would hardly have been possible without the cooperation and the full participation of all Member States, individually or within the various groups.

I wish to tell you all, particularly the permanent representatives who helped me as facilitators throughout this long marathon of negotiations and consultations, how deeply grateful I am. I would also like to thank in particular the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management for the valuable contribution of its staff.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to you, Mr. Secretary-General, and to reiterate my admiration for having inspired our deliberations but also for the courage and exemplary tenacity with which you have guided, even in the tumult, the work of the United Nations at this crucial time in our history.

I cannot conclude without wishing every success and good luck to President Eliasson and to convey once again my profound gratitude to all those who directly or indirectly contributed to the smooth functioning of the Gabonese presidency throughout the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, which in effect was also an African presidency.

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President (*spoke in French*): We have now concluded the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. May I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I declare closed the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.